

# Wild & wilder *Shirley Browning*

**M**y idea to create a wild border against our boundary with a neighbour's field is certainly a learning curve and has, so far, taught me many lessons - the main one being that we mortals have little influence over nature and the vagaries of the British weather. Even so, I still carry on planning and designing as if all my ideas will come to glorious fruition, as they do on all the gardening television programmes and in the magazines.

The introduction of grasses in place of many perennials has been quite successful, except for the *Pennisetum* 'Hameln' which did not survive the winter. I left the clumps of brown stems in place, hoping for a springtime revival, but no green shoots emerged and so 'Hameln' was consigned to the compost heap. In contrast, the attractive variegated varieties of *Carex* 'Ice dance', 'Fishers form' and 'Evergold' have thrived in a section of the border in the shade of a *Pyrus salicifolia*, an ornamental weeping pear tree. Some of the 'Ice dance' had even formed runners and produced new little ice dancers. The border only needed some re-positioning of a few plants which were smothered by the prolific growth of pink campion, a result of my wild flower planting (or should I say, my random scattering of seeds from a packet of wild flower mix).

The *Stipa tenuissima*, now renamed *Nassella tenuissima* have thrived, and this favourite of mine waved its feathery plumes and swayed in the breeze, as the books describe, but was rudely assaulted by the unseasonal heavy rain resulting in a very sad scene of flattened, feathery fronds lying prostrate and dejected, horizontally draped over emerging perennials that were intended to complement the new grassy landscape. But now that the end of summer is approaching, things are looking better, and my new grasses have enjoyed some welcome sunshine.

We have had the 'pond man' in to make an alteration to our garden pond, near the house, which was formed by the previous owner and was a rather strange shape, being a double circle or figure of eight. Probably it was



intended to have a little bridge across the middle, but the job was never done. We now have half the original pond, the other half having been filled in with gravel and a rill running across it. Bog plants have been planted into this area by my assistant gardener, a young woman who comes fortnightly to give welcome help to this ageing gardening enthusiast. The former pond was too full of fish according to Graham, the pond expert. He removed them and we now have a wild life aquatic centre for frogs, newts etc. Hopefully, in the future, the frogspawn which appears every spring will develop into a welcome population of froglets instead of providing a meal for hungry fish.

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- **Like writing letters to people with similar interests**
- **Like writing for our quarterly Newsletter**
- **Like writing in general**

Our letters are still sent in the 'old-fashioned way' by post, but the Newsletters are sent by email to keep costs down. If you do not have a computer the only outlay is the cost of a book of stamps yearly. Long-lasting friendships can be formed!

**If you would like to know more about this group have a look at the CGC website under 'Groups – Correspondence' to see examples of our most recent Newsletters. We are always looking for new Members so please contact Lorraine Rudd, Editor either by email: [lorrainejrdudd@sky.com](mailto:lorrainejrdudd@sky.com) or post: Brynheulog, 45 Heol y Graig, Cwmgwrach, Neath SA11 5TW.**

These changes to our cottage garden have resulted in us attaining a plaque from the Dorset Wildlife Trust, now proudly displayed on the front gate, stating 'This is a wildlife friendly garden'. Probably due to this public announcement, we now have an additional wildlife 'feature' in the form of a feral cat family. The mother and two kittens appeared about six weeks ago and, rightly or wrongly, I started to feed them. They were a threesome for a while and then the mother seemed to go off and left her offspring on their own. But the pattern has now changed again, and mostly only the smallest kitten comes around - as I write she is feeding on the leftovers from our Sunday lunch.

So now we have a wildlife haven! Of course, in our fairly large garden there are still the cottage garden plants I adore. Some pale yellow hollyhocks are blooming against a deep purple *viticella* clematis and nearby, clematis 'Bill Mackenzie' clambers over a trellis. In the gravel bed, a self-sown *Origanum* with deep purple flowers is attracting a host of bees and butterflies (at last). What will next year bring? There's never a dull moment in the garden!

*Shirley Browning gardens in North Dorset.*